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CHIP-CARVING

AND OTHER SURFACE CARVING

BY

ELEANOR ROWE

Late Manager of the School of Art Wood-Carving, South Kensington
Author of "Practical Wood-Carving," "Hints on Wood-Carving,"
"Hints on Chip-Carving,"
"French Wood-Carvings from the National Museums"

WITH 71 ILLUSTRATIONS
IN LINE AND HALF TONE

Fourth Thousand

LONDON:
B. T. BATSFORD, 94 HIGH HOLBORN

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PREFACE

My little book "Hints on Chip-Carving" (of which 13,000 copies have been sold) being out of print, I have thought it better not to reprint it, but to write a new book, which would combine self-instruction in Chip-Carving with some of the many non-geometrical developments that the craft will lend itself to. The special features of the present book are the chapters on Strapwork, Freehand, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Maori surface patterns.

The book has been written for the home worker, who cannot give the time for the training required for more elaborate carving. The more advanced carver, especially the teacher, should find some of the suggestions useful and might also be able to develop them still further.

A good deal of surface work, executed with a gouge and a **V**-tool, has not been dealt with here, as a chapter has been devoted to it in my "Practical Wood-Carving," issued by the same publisher.

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Some of the matter in the present book appeared in "Home Handicrafts," and I am indebted to the courtesy of the Editor for the use of several of the blocks, for which I supplied the designs.

ELEANOR ROWE.

46 PEMBROKE ROAD,
KENSINGTON, W.
October, 1908.

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NOTE

Fig. 34 has been omitted in the numbering of the illustrations

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CHIP-CARVING

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE term "Chip-carving" was first made use of in England in 1888. The combined words help to convey an idea of the work, which is purely surface ornament. It consists of chipping out the wood into various patterns, in contradistinction to the bold sweeping cut required when the ornament is in relief. Chip-carving is to be met with in stone as well as in wood, and is the same kind of ornament as that described by Professor Willis, in his work on Canterbury Cathedral, as composed of "shallow notches."

Mr. A. Marshall, in his "Antique Carved Furniture," describes the border in Fig. 2 as composed of V-sunk rosettes; and Mr. Fred Roe, in his book on "Ancient Coffers and Chests," describes the same sort of decoration on the Climping chest as "geometrical roundels or whirls, filled with geometrical tracery." This latter term is very misleading to the carver, as in the geometrical tracery there should be bars or bands, and the ground is either pierced or sunk. In the chip or notch-carving there is no flat surface to the ground, which consists entirely of V-sunk channels, and the bar or band is not a necessary part of

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the design. The geometrical chip-carving is earlier than the geometrical tracery, and it is not until the end of the thirteenth century that the two were combined.

Chip-carving has undoubtedly been practised in all ages and in all countries, and is the stepping-stone to carving in relief.

It is interesting to go to the Asiatic or Ethnographical Gallery at the British Museum, and compare the various crafts of primitive man, and see how the weaving-motives run through most of the designs.

The surface-carving to be found there may be divided into three groups :—

1st. The geometrical chip-carving. Cases 127, 128, 129, 141, 156.

2nd. The New Zealand or Maori carving, consisting of interlacing and meandering bands. Cases 133 to 139.

3rd. Strapwork patterns. Cases 164, 165.

Note also a coloured box in the North American Indian case, 191, and a Polynesian case, 201.

Examples may also be seen at the United Service Museum, Whitehall.

It is noticeable in countries quite remote from each other, how universal the chip-carving has been. The reason is not far to seek. Given a piece of wood and a knife, man would intuitively incise chequers, zigzags, circles, etc., upon the wood ; and then, in order to obtain a richer effect, notch out the spaces between. No country can lay claim to the invention of chip-carving, although it was largely developed in Scandinavia.

The early examples are always geometrical, but it is in the development of free-hand patterns that a fresh impetus may be given to the craft.

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Owing to the perishable nature of wood the earliest examples are to be found in stone, dating from the eighth century in France and throughout the Norman period in England. One example is given in stone, from Studland Church, Dorsetshire, in which the characteristic chip-carving cuts are well exemplified (see Figs. 15 and 16).

The theory, held by some architects, on the authority of Gervase, that the early Norman carving in Canterbury Cathedral, was done by an axe is not supported by practical craftsmen.

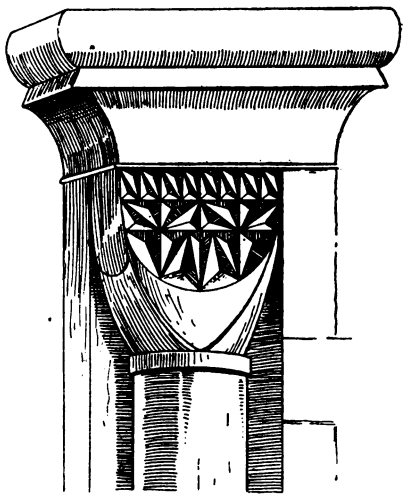

Fig. 1. 12th Century Norman Capital.

Some of the earliest examples in wood are to be found in Norway on some of the fine old doors of the eleventh and twelfth centuries; but in these the chip-carving is a subsidiary decoration to the elaborate interlaced ornament.

In the Berlin Museum there is an interesting diptych of the thirteenth century (Fig. 44). It is one of the earliest specimens to be met with in any of the Continental museums. It shows a departure from the strictly geometrical, the design being quite Romanesque in feeling.

One of the earliest wooden examples in England is the church chest at Stoke d'Abernon, Surrey. One large circle, filled in with chip-carving, decorates each of the

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stiles and the centre panel. It was probably carved during the first half of the thirteenth century, before geometrical tracery had been developed in England.

A chest with similar decoration is in the church at Climping, Sussex.

A little later in date is the chest at Wilne, in Derbyshire, on which there is a border of circles, 5½ ins. in diameter, and carved with the V-sunk grooves, now popularly known as "Chip-carving." Below the border is a row of small pointed and cusped arches, the mullions to which are in a sadly mutilated condition. The stiles have been restored (Fig. 2).

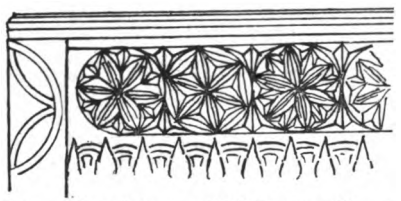

Fig. 2. Detail from 14th(?) Century Chest.

In the fourteenth century in England chip-carving was often used on the church chests, more especially on the stiles and rails, as it did not necessitate very deep cutting, and the large central panel was ornamented with tracery. There is a very fine example in Peterborough Cathedral.

It is difficult to find any English chip-carving examples of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, although doubtless many exist. Of the seventeenth century there are two specimens in the Victoria and Albert Museum, one a knife-box, dated 1632, No. 55, 1853, and an oak box, No. 433, 1896, dated 1648. In the eighteenth century carved knitting-sheaths or sticks were very popular, but these are almost all now in private collections. Wooden stay-busks were also carved. In the last century apple scoops and spoons were favourite objects for the home carver.

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These smaller objects were shaped out of a piece of solid wood with a knife, and then the surface was decorated with various patterns, in which one or two hearts invariably were introduced, as well as the date and the initials of the donor and receiver.

Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.

Spinning-wheel Heads. Stockholm Museum.

In the Stockholm Museum there is a most interesting collection of spinning-wheel heads, and two of them are illustrated in Figs. 3 and 4. They were probably executed

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in the eighteenth century. They had much the same meaning attached to them as the carved knitting-needle holder and the stay-busk had in England. The Swedish peasant, when he was in love with a girl, and before he said anything to her, carved a head for her spinning wheel. If the girl accepted the gift, it meant that he was her recognised suitor. If the gift were rejected, the young man was not to press his suit and was supposed never to offer the gift to any one else as a token of love.

The designs of Figs. 3 and 4 are admirably suited to this simple style of carving. The pierced work is well centralised and tied to the rest of the wood, of which a substantial portion is left solid on the outside. These designs might be adapted for the backs of chairs, trestle stools, etc. The introduction of symbolical motives in the old work naturally adds an interest and a charm to this simple carving, and one regrets that the modern carver has lost sight of it. The chip-carver's effort now is to produce quickly for sale, for presents, or for bazaars, a number of small articles on which he neither cares to spend much time nor money.

In the Victoria and Albert Museum are four panels of an oak footstool which originally contained a small heater. The sides are perforated so as to let the hot air out, but as wood always deteriorates when subjected to heat, it is not advisable to use it for such a purpose. The panel illustrated in Fig. 5 is coarsely cut and not well designed, but it is given as an example of freehand chip-carving, a feature rarely to be seen in old work. The central flower and buds are well thought out as regards the cuts and are very effective, but the cuts on the leaves should have sprung upwards from the central stem.

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The ornament at the base of the stem does not balance well with the flower, and would have looked better had it been partly pierced. A quarter repeat of two of the other panels is given in Figs. 6 and 7. They are better designed and combine a geometrical setting out with some freehand

Fig. 5. Pierced Panel with Chip-carving. German. 18th Century.
Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 603, 1901.

detail. The centre circles are pierced, and the voids and the solids are well balanced.

The combination of the pierced openings with the chip-carving has many advantages. It reduces the weight of the wood and, by giving greater shadow in parts, emphasises the carved detail.

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It might be very effectively used for the front panels of a reading-desk, choir-stalls, bench-ends, etc., and might be attempted by a village class for a village church when more elaborate carving would be out of the question.

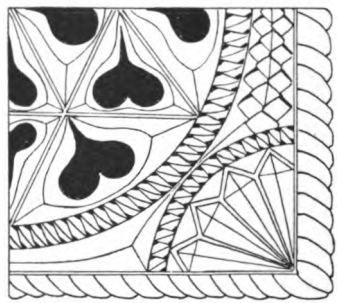

Fig. 6.

Fig. 7.

Pierced Panels with Chip-carving. German. 18th Century.
Victoria and Albert Museum, Nos. 599–600, 1901.

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Chapter II

WOOD AND TOOLS

Although chip-carving is a primitive or a peasant craft, there is no reason why it should not be practised in these days. It should take the place with boys and men that simple embroidery takes with girls and women, although there is no reason why the latter should not do it also.

Chip-carving is essentially a home craft, as it requires but few tools, can be worked on any kind of table, and makes no mess or litter. The work is neither fatiguing for the mind nor for the body, but is always full of interest if the patterns are varied. A slight knowledge of geometry is necessary for setting out the geometrical patterns, and for this T. R. Ablett's Drawing Books, No. 12 and No. 18, price 2d. each, or "Gill's First Grade Practical Geometry," price 2d., would be found sufficient; the "Fifth Standard Practical Geometry," which is the same price, explains the way in which the set squares are used—also an essential matter.

The student will require pencil compasses, dividers, a steel foot-ruler, and a set square of 45° and one of 60°. The books should be bought first, as they describe the implements required.

Before carving any object the size of the space to be decorated should be first set out on paper, and the leading lines of the geometrical pattern found. The setting out upon the wood is then quite an easy matter.

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The nicest wood for the student to begin with is lime, but unfortunately it is not always easy to obtain, and it also varies very considerably, some pieces being very tough and hard to cut. Next to lime, the best American white wood is the most satisfactory, and not so close in the grain as lime. Yellow pine is workable, but the grain is difficult to manage. When some experience has been gained other woods can be used, such as holly, sycamore (both white woods), Kawrie pine, oak, American and Italian walnut, and teak. American bass wood should be avoided, especially by the inexperienced. A white wood is easier for working at night, as the pattern shows up on it better, and consequently is not so fatiguing for the eyes.

The grain of the wood is composed of bundles of fibres which grow upwards. When we speak of "with the grain," it is in the direction of the growth of the fibres upwards; "against the grain" is to cut downwards into the fibres, and "across the grain" at right angles to the fibres. In carving, especially in soft woods, it does not always follow that the wood cuts easiest with the grain; often the tool is easier to work across the grain; the difficulty lies in cutting against the grain.

The student must judge by experience which way he ought to cut the wood. If it splinters and does not cut easily, he must stop and try another direction, until the tool is able to master the grain by a clean sharp cut.

A bench is unnecessary for chip-carving, nor is it desirable to fix the work, as it has to be continually shifted, and pressure from the left wrist and fingers will keep the wood steady whilst the cut is being made. A woollen cloth should be put on the table.

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In most of the old examples the knife was most generally used, although the carver often supplemented it with home-made tools.

With the advancement of what is called "civilisation" tools to fit every curve and shape are now being made, and the exact adaptability of the pattern to the tool is lost sight of, so that much of the charm and spontaneity of this simple carving is lost. In Germany V-tools are largely used for chip-carving, but they are very difficult to sharpen, and consequently should only be used by an

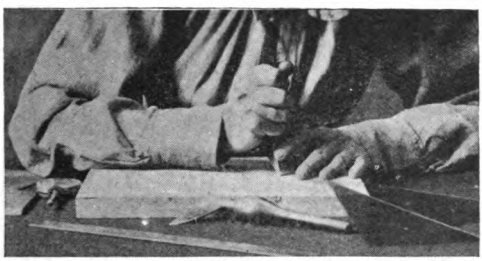

Fig. 8. Inserting the Knife.

expert. The advantage of them is, that a V-tool in one cut will make a V-groove, which would take three cuts to execute with the knife or chisel.

The student must decide for himself whether he will use a knife or the ordinary tools. If he has not done any wood-carving, then let him procure at first a knife, as it will do the work of four tools; but if the student has been used to tools he will find the knife at first difficult to manipulate. If he has the necessary tools, let him use them.

There are a great many varieties of knives, but the one illustrated in Figs. 8 and 10 is suitable, as the bulbous handle prevents the fingers from getting cramped.

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Chip-carving is based on a triangular cut, shown in its most elemental form in Fig. 9, which gives four different borders composed of the same triangular cut but differently arranged. The shaded parts show where the surface of the wood is to be removed. The border at 2 is the first pattern reversed and duplicated. The wood

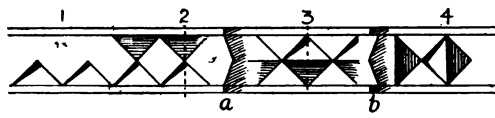

Fig. 9.

should be cut deep at the apex of the triangle, and very lightly as it reaches the base line. Note the section at *a* on the dotted line at 2. In the third pattern the diamond is cut into two triangles, the ridge being on the central horizontal line, as in section *b* on the dotted line at 3. The student must study the sections before he begins to

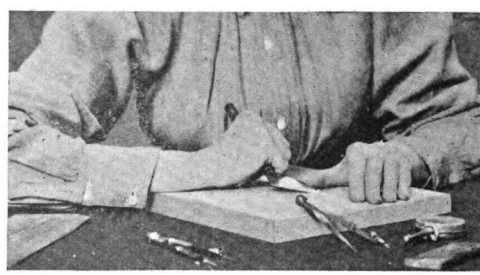

Fig. 10. Removing the Wood—Second Cut.

carve. In Fig. 8 the carver is inserting the knife at the apex of the triangle ready for the first cut. He will then press the blade along the line, gradually reducing the pressure towards the base line. Note how the knife is held, and the position of the hands and fingers. Great care must be taken that the first cut is vertical, as the

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wood must neither be cut under nor sloped out. The carver is cutting the first pattern given in Fig. 9 as a border to a circle.

The second cut is illustrated in Fig. 10, and for this the cutting edge of the knife must be inclined at a slight angle to the wood, and the handle kept low so as not to cut too deep.

If the student elects to work with the tools he had better procure a full $\frac{1}{4}$-in. spade chisel, No. 1, Fig. 11; a veiner, No. 2, and a $\frac{3}{16}$th-in. flat gouge, No. 3. With these three tools most of the patterns illustrated can be executed, except the Maori patterns, and the borders *a*, *b*, and *c*, in Fig. 26.

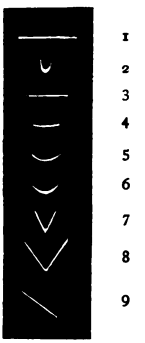

Fig. 11.

In Fig. 12 the same cut is being done with the chisel as with the knife in Fig. 8, only instead of dragging the point along the line the cut is made at once. After a little practice this can be done with the knife. For the second cut hold the handle

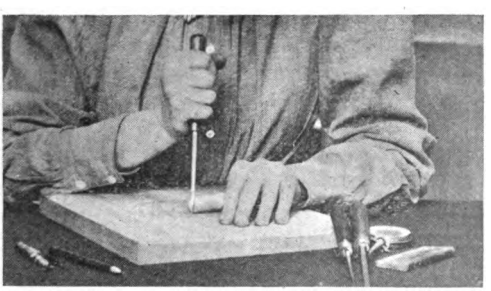
Fig. 12. Using the Spade Chisel.

of the tool low, and slope the wood away from the base line, and get the ridge of it sharp in the next cut.

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Without sharp tools no good work can be accomplished, and the sooner the student learns to sharpen them for himself the better. It will be necessary to have a leather strop prepared with tallow and emery, an oil-can, a Washita stone, and an Arkansas or finer slip for sharpening the inside of the tools and for the smaller tools.

To sharpen the knife, the spade chisel, and the skew chisel, rest the Washita slip on the table and wet it with the best machine oil, keep the cutting edge of the tool flat on the stone and rub it quickly up and down, one side first, and then the other. Wipe the oil off and then strop it on both sides on the leather, as a gentleman strops his razor. The veiner must be sharpened rather differently. Rub out the inside of the tool with the Arkansas stone, which should be rounded off on one side at the edges so as to fit the inside of the veiner, leaving one end angular for the V. Be careful not to put more pressure on one part than another, as the thinner parts will wear away more quickly.

Use about one inch of the stone from the lower edge, and keep this as flat as possible to the inside surface of the tool, just sufficient to touch it without turning the cutting edge of the tool over. For the back of the tool, hold the slip in the right hand and the tool in the left, and move the flat surface of the stone up and down, and the tool from side to side, until a slightly frayed edge appears. Wipe off the oil and strop the tool on the leather. The flat gouge is done in just the same way, only the thicker edge of the Arkansas stone is used for the inside, and the back of the tool may be worked with the Washita stone, holding it in the hand as just described; the stone must only be placed on the table for a

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knife, chisel, or skew chisel. The amateur should, if possible, obtain a lesson in sharpening from a practical carver. He should not consult a carpenter, as his tools are very differently sharpened. The carver should frequently use the strop during a morning's work.

Fuller instructions for sharpening the tools, with photographic demonstrations, are given in the author's "Practical Wood-Carving."

Having mastered the cuts previously described, the student must now practise the V and the veined line. In executing the V-line with a knife, it will be necessary at first to make three cuts—first a straight cut, and then a slanting cut on each side to meet the first one. For straight lines a steel ruler may be used for the central line, keeping the knife close up to the ruler as if you were cutting cardboard. The pressure on the knife must be equal all along the line, and the depth of the cut should be a bare eighth of an inch. The knife is held as in Fig. 8 for the first cut, and the line is cut from left to right. The lines across the grain should be cut first. The centre line being completed, make the cuts on either side of it. Hold the knife and the hands in much the same way, but incline the blade of the knife slightly towards the wood instead of keeping it vertical. Take off a small thread of wood from each side of the central line, and the result will be a V, or angular groove.

The chisel can be used in two or three ways. The orthodox carver's method would be to hold the tool vertically, as in Fig. 12, and cut with equal pressure all along the line, inserting the tool into the corner of the previous cut before making a fresh one. The lines on either side are cut much in the same way, except that the

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tool, instead of being held upright, must be slightly inclined towards the wood. It will be noticed that with the chisel you cut from right to left, whereas with the knife the cut is from left to right. In circular lines the knife is worked towards the carver and the chisel away from him. Another way of using the chisel, and one which is quite easy to those who have done any metal or cut leather work, is to hold the tool just in the same way as the knife in cutting leather. A corner of the chisel is inserted in the wood and the handle slightly inclined towards the

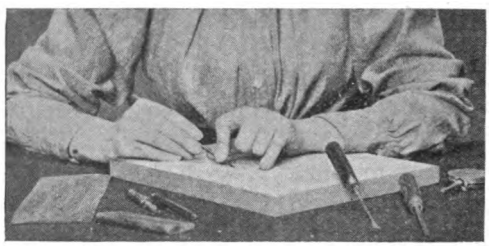

Fig. 13. The Veiner.
(Spade-chisel is resting on the wood block.)

carver instead of being kept vertical, whilst the left hand, more especially the thumb, guides the tool. Grasp the chisel very firmly with the right hand, and push the tool away from you with the left thumb along the line. By inclining the chisel to the right or left the side lines can be cut in the same way. This sweeping cut is a very quick and useful method, but requires experience, and should not be attempted at first unless the student is familiar with it in the other crafts.

We next come to the veiner, and the way the tool is held is shown in Fig. 13. Keep the handle low, and guide the tool with the thumb and first finger. The tool, as it

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runs along the line, shaves off a thread of wood, leaving a slight semi-circular groove which it is impossible to reproduce with the knife. The V-tool is held and used in the same way as the veiner.

Practise cutting straight lines, chequers, zigzags, circles, etc., so as to obtain facility in doing all sorts of lines, as they are difficult to do at first. The tool must be held firmly, yet the wrists must be lissome and the arms supple, so that the tool can be worked quite freely. A very good example of this incised carving is the hand-mangle in the Stockholm Museum (Fig. 14). It is composed chiefly of incised lines, but here and there we see the wood removed from the small triangular pockets. The central portion, where the circles intersect, would be a very good exercise for circular lines, if set out larger. The interlacing border on either side of the handle is cleverly arranged.

There are occasions when the wood is not thick enough to admit of more than an incised line, and if the wood is stained first a very good effect may be obtained (see Chap X, p. 79.).

Fig. 14.
Swedish
Mangleboard.

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Chapter III

GEOMETRICAL PATTERNS

All geometrical patterns in chip-carving look richer if the pattern is outlined first with a V or veined line before cutting the V-sunk grooves. The combination of the V or veined line with the angular grooves may be seen in Figs. 15 and 16. Mark off along the base line the space *a*, *b*, and erect perpendiculars at each point by means of the set squares. Then rule the lines *ac* and *bc*;

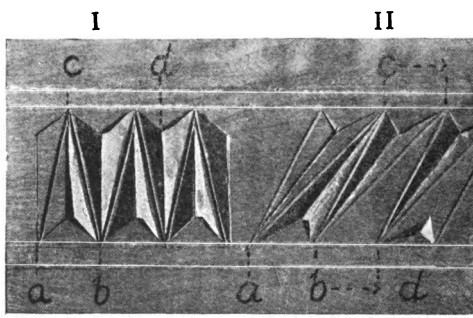

Fig. 15.

inside the triangle *a*, *b*, *c* mark in the small triangle *d*. When the drawing is finished put in the oblique lines with a V or a veiner, and then remove the wood with the knife or chisel as described on p. 20. It is better that the marginal lines should be done at the last, as, should the student let the tool slip, the mark can be scratched out with the knife or chisel.

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The first pattern of Fig. 15 was executed with a knife, the second with a $\frac{1}{4}$-in. spade-chisel and a veiner. Instead of the lines at *a* and *b* in the second pattern of Fig. 15 being perpendicular to the base line, they are ruled at an angle of 60°. The triangles *a*, *b*, *c* may be carved continuously, as in the first three examples, or be alternately carved and plain (*b*) or partially plain as at *d*, in which the small triangle (*d*) is made into a "sunk pocket."

III

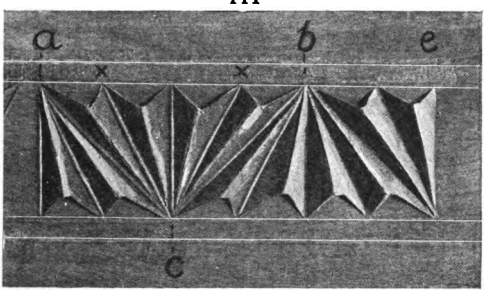

Fig. 16.

In the first pattern of Fig. 16 the triangles *a*, *b*, *c* are first set out, the apex *c* being a right angle (90°). Perpendiculars are ruled at *a*, *b*, *c*, and then the intermediate lines are put in. The portion *a* to *b* was done with the chisel and the veiner, and from *b* to *e* with the knife. It is easier at first to practise the patterns without the V or veined lines.

In Fig. 17 we have exactly the same cut as in Fig. 15, only the sides, *b c* and *b c*, are curved instead of straight, and consequently a curved tool is necessary, like No. 3, Fig. 11. This is known as a very flat gouge, but is not quite

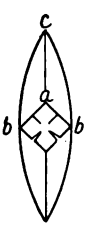

Fig. 17.

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so flat as an "extra flat gouge." This curved cut can be done with a knife, but the student must not make the first cut too deep. It will be noticed that in the middle of the groove in Fig. 17 a small diamond is left up (*a*). This is usually ornamented with two cuts on each side. The first one is made at right angles to the sides of the diamond, as shown in the two cuts above *b b*. The second cut is slightly inclined to the first one, as shown below *b b*. The second cut should not be too deep, and the wood should be sloped at an angle and not be cut straight down. Care must be taken that the second cut runs into the first one, when the chip will come out at once. If it does not, the first cut must be made deeper. By this method of notching, more shadow is obtained than with a V-opening, and consequently the cuts are more effective.

In Germany the notches are made with a small V-tool (Fig. 11, No. 7) after the vertical cuts are made, but before the wood is sloped from the sides as in Fig. 18. Sometimes these little nicks are put in with a veiner. It is very much easier to make the angular groove when the triangle or diamond is left up in the middle, as in Fig. 17, than to take the groove right through, as in Fig. 53*b*, when a segment of a circle is formed, and not a triangle.

Fig. 18.

The term "sunk pocket" is given to a diamond, or a square, or a triangle, in which all the sides are sloped towards the middle. It is the most difficult of all the elements to do, as the angles at which the sides meet must be sharp and straight.

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The four-sided pocket is not so often used as the triangular pocket, but the method of carving the two is exactly the same. In Fig. 19 the larger triangle is composed of three smaller triangles, 1 2 3, 1 2 4, and 1 3 4, their apexes meeting in the centre at 1. Insert one corner of the spade-chisel (or the knife) at 1, and let the cutting edge of the tool coincide with the line to be cut. Press the tool heavily at 1, and gradually lighten the pressure until 2 is reached; cut 1 4 and 1 3 in the same way.

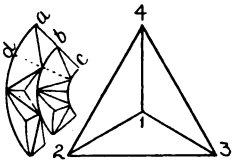

Fig. 19.

Next slant the wood from the outer sides of the triangles 2 4, 2 3, and 3 4, into the central line as described for *a b* and *a c* on p. 20. When the sides of the pocket are curved the flat gouge or the knife should be used.

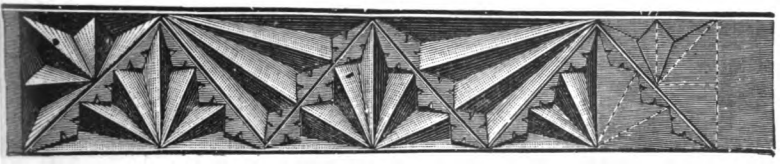

Fig. 20.

The sunk pockets can be set out between parallel straight lines or curved ones, as in the box lid, Fig. 33. A diagram of these pockets is given on the left of Fig. 19. The lines *a b c* are struck from the centre of the circle and are parallel to the circumference; they are then divided up by lines according to the space required (*a d* in diagram), and from these points lines are drawn to the centre of the circle, and the three inner divisions are drawn by hand.

The left-hand triangular corner on Fig. 20 is carved

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into four triangular sunk pockets, and the pattern could be alternated with triangles of sunk pockets, and with triangles in which the third side is left up and nicked as in illustration. The black lines in the right-hand corner of Fig. 20 are the lines that are to be cut, and the dotted lines are the ridge lines, or the line from which the wood is to be sloped.

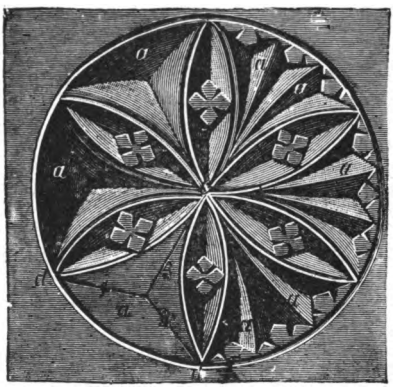

Fig. 21.

In Fig. 21 two alternative treatments are shown, the right consisting of fans and lozenges, and the left of lozenges and sunk pockets. The whole should be veined before sloping the sides.

A flat gouge, No. 3, would be necessary for the curved sides. The triangular pockets on the left (*a*) are given large for practice, but they are on too large a scale for the rest of the detail and would have to be subdivided in a design. When the detail is not of a uniform scale, the harmony and balance of the design are lost.

To set out Fig. 21, describe a circle with a radius seven-eighths of an inch; step out the radius six times round the circumference, and from each of these points (*d*), keeping the same radius, describe arcs passing from the circumference through the centre of the circle. Divide the space between these arcs either by the eye or with the compasses.

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Fig. 22 is an effective border and looks equally well on a circular as on a square object. The points *a* and *b* are the centres from which the intersecting semicircles are struck, the radius being the width of the border. Each semicircle gives an alternative pattern composed of the elementary cuts previously explained.

In setting out Fig. 22 on a circular object like a frame or a bread platter in which the width of the moulding to be carved is already fixed, it is better to describe one semicircle on the wood in order to judge the amount of space required for each division. The border must then be

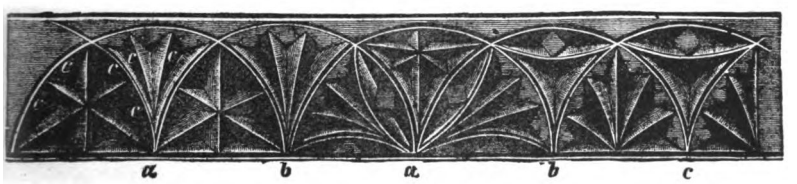

Fig. 22.

divided into the requisite number of spaces, and the dividing lines *a* and *b* made to radiate to the centre of the platter or frame. The spaces will probably have to be rather larger or smaller than the size required, and when this is the case the student has to humour the semicircle by striking it either just below or just above the base line of the moulding.

On a flat object like a table the centres of the semicircles can be taken on the inner line, as the width of the border not being fixed the outer circle or boundary line can be described after the pattern has been set out. If used for the sides of a box the pattern should end at *c*, both on the long and short side. Find the centre of each side, and

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then divide into the required number of repeats, adjusting the margins according to the width of the semicircle. The long and the short sides of a frame or box usually involve some little trouble, as it is seldom that the same repeat will fit both sides. In this case the corners should all be made alike, and the extra space divided amongst the middle repeats of the long side. The difference will not be observable.

Fig. 23 is suitable for the sides of a small box or frame. The point at *a* is one of the centres for the intersecting

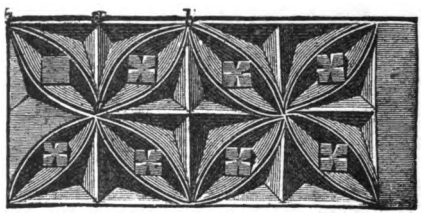

Fig. 23.

semicircles, and *a b* is the radius. Note how effective the star is in the centre and that it is the result of the combination of four sunk pockets.

In setting out Fig. 24 start from the centre, and do not put in the outer circles until the last—a rule to be observed in all geometrical designs. The reason is obvious, because if an equilateral triangle, semicircle, or circle have to fit into a given space, touching three or four boundary lines, it must be either the same width as its height, or, in the case of a semicircle, the height of the radius; consequently the width can only be found after the space has been divided up into the required repeats and one of the details described. The pattern in Fig. 24 is based on the hexagon and equilateral triangle. De-

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scribe a circle (which will subsequently be rubbed out), and space out the radius six times round the circumference. On each of these spaces describe an equilateral triangle and carry on the arcs between. To form the bands, describe the smaller triangles from the same points with a shorter radius. After this describe the

Fig. 24.

inner circles within the hexagon and divide the rosette into six parts by drawing the diagonals of the hexagon. The two outer circles which form the marginal band may now be put in. The pattern on the band is executed with a small gouge (No. 6), and consists of a vertical cut with a slanting one to meet it.

A difficulty often arises in setting out a border of circles on a circular table, from the fact that the student marks

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in the width of the border before he has decided on the size of the circles with which it is to be composed. The best way is to describe the outer circumference half an inch within the edge of the table, and then divide this, say, into twelve divisions and rule lines from each radiating to the centre; we shall then have twelve sectors, in one of which work out the problem given in Fig. 25.

"*To inscribe a circle in a sector of a circle.*

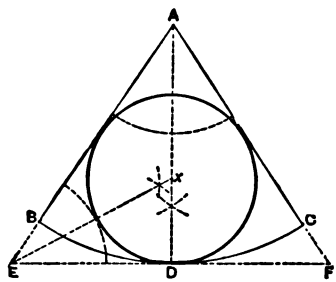

Fig. 25.

"Bisect the angle BAC by line AD. At D draw line EF perpendicular to AD. Produce the sides AB, AC to meet line EF in E and F. Bisect the angle AEF by a line to meet AD in x. From x as centre and x D as radius inscribe the circle."

The centres for the others can be marked off from the one previously found. The border having been completed, work out the rest of the design from the centre. If the border has been left to the last and the circles have to be described on the inner bounding line, the same problem can be used.

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Chapter IV

GEOMETRICAL PATTERNS—*continued.*

Four varieties of borders are given in Fig. 26. For patterns *a*, *c*, *d*, the circumference of the circle has to be divided into eight parts and each of these parts again

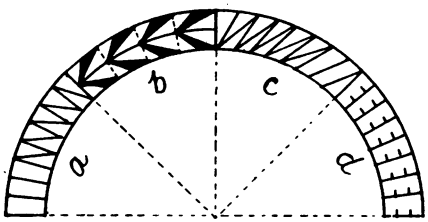

Fig. 26.

divided into eight. For the pattern at *a* rule lines from each of the eight points to the centre until it cuts the inner line of the band, and then draw diagonal lines in each of the eight compartments. Cut the outer row of the triangles, sloping the wood from the diagonal line to the two sides cut (see Fig. 33).

The same cut is used at *b*, only the setting out is different, the space being divided into four parts instead of eight. The dotted lines are only working lines to mark the boundaries of the triangles to be cut out, and which are painted black. The central line must be put in with a veiner, a V, a chisel, or a knife. This pattern might be described as the feathered border. Another setting out of *a* is shown at *c*, the oblong compartments

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running obliquely, instead of radiating to the centre. These oblique lines are cut across with the chisel. The sides of the triangles, bounded on either side by the circumference of the circles, are also cut, and then the wood is sloped away from the diagonal line into these cuts, working to the left on the outer circle and to the right on the inner circle. The effect is so like a cable that *c* is known as the "cable border." Variety may be obtained by making the compartments smaller or bigger, or making them nearly square and radiating the sides to the centre. This latter setting out makes a complete change, but the effect of the cable is lost. Quite a different pattern is given at *d*. The radiating lines are cut with a chisel, and the wood is slanted down from each. The little lines are marked in with compasses, and then small notches are made as described on page 27. For *a b c* a small skew chisel (No. 9, Fig. 11) is necessary, unless the student can work with the knife, the angle being too acute for the spade-chisel.

It is certain that the modern young woman would not care for a pair of carved stay busks, as was the fashion in the eighteenth century, but she might not disdain to wear a set of carved buttons.

Chip-carving is a most appropriate ornamentation for a button, as part of the flat surface of the wood is always retained. It must be borne in mind that the surface of a button must be smooth, and that the edges should be carefully finished off so that there may be nothing to prevent the button from slipping easily in and out of the buttonhole.

Buttons, turned in pear-wood, 1½ in. and 1 in. in diameter are suitable sizes for carving.

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When the design is composed of concentric circles, as in Figs. 27 to 30, it is better to have the lines put in by the turner, as it is an exceedingly difficult matter to do them by hand on a small convex surface.

Fig. 27.
Carved Button.

Fig. 28.
Carved Butter Mould.

Before commencing to carve the buttons they should be previously stained to the desired colour and fixed to a piece of waste wood, deal or pine for preference. This piece of wood must have some circular recesses prepared with a gouge, deep enough to receive the shank of the button and to admit of the under surface resting evenly on the top of the wood. A small spot of glue, fish glue or seccotine, should then be put on the centre of the shank, and three spots at intervals on the under surface of the button, being careful to avoid the pierced holes. Drop this into the circular recess, and twist it round two or three times and press it well in; then place a heavy weight on the top until it is firmly fixed.

It is as well not to glue on to one board more than three large buttons, or six small ones, as, if the wood is too long or too broad, or if the buttons are too crowded,

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they are not so easy to carve. The board on which the buttons are glued can be cramped to the table if necessary. Time is saved if three or four buttons are worked together.

The border on Fig. 27 is the same as *b*, Fig. 26; the centre flower is carved similarly to the "cable border" (*c*). It may here be noted that, as a border, it is inappropriate for a button, as the surface is too rough unless the centre of the cable is kept flat. For the same reason the border *d*, Fig. 26, would not be advisable.

Figs. 28, 29, and 30 are illustrations of butter moulds from the Stockholm Museum. The Swedish peasant,

Fig. 29.

Fig. 30.

Butter Moulds. Stockholm Museum.

when she takes her butter to market, places it in a small wooden keg, and ornaments the top of the butter by pressing on it an incised pattern, carved in wood, which comes out in relief on the butter. Similar moulds are used for ornamenting cakes. Examples of these cake and butter moulds from Ceylon may be seen in the British Museum. Those in the Stockholm Museum are about seven inches in diameter, but for butter pats they would necessarily have to be smaller.

In many an English country home it would be a pleasant recreation to carve the moulds for the butter pats and also

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for the cake moulds. They would have to be carved in a hard wood, such as pear-wood, and the carving should be fairly deep and sharp. It can easily be tested by soaking the carved mould in water and pressing it on the butter, and if the impression is not sharp enough the carving can be rectified when the wood is quite dry.

Fig. 27 looks very well carved on a button, and the centres of the butter moulds could also be adapted for this purpose and for circular boxes. For carved buttons the design should not have too much detail. A plain band of wood should always be left on the outside edge, as in Fig. 27.

The hand mangles of the Scandinavian countries are often most richly carved, and supply an endless variety of patterns. They vary in size from about twenty-six to thirty inches in length, by about three to six inches in width. Two very interesting examples from the Stockholm Museum are given in Figs. 31 and 32. The top circle on Fig. 31 would do admirably as a design for a button, as would also the centre part of the middle circle in Fig. 32. A wealth of patterns is to be found in Fig. 31, which either by duplicating or by other combinations will suggest endless designs for oblong boxes, for the lid as well as the sides, and for frames and other articles. Long narrow boxes for knitting needles or pencils are always useful. Notice the effective little border on the left of the handle and the one which runs down each side. The triangular border on the outside edge of Fig. 28 and on the left-hand side outer edge of Fig. 31 has the addition of a zigzag band, which, although a little tiresome to set out, is much more ornate than the simple triangular cuts as shown in Fig. 29. The pear-shaped divisions in the

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Fig. 31.
Scandinavian Hand Mangle.
Stockholm Museum

centre of Fig. 31 are also a new feature. The bands of all these geometrical divisions are ornamented either with the "cable border" (*c*), or the feathered border (*b*). In the lower part of Fig. 32 we see that the geometrical setting out gives place to a freehand design, the stalks and tendrils being grooved, and the flowers and buds carved into angular channels.

The student should now have no difficulty in carving the box lid illustrated in Fig. 33. The lid is composed of two intersecting circles, the bands of which form a lozenge-shaped compartment in the middle, in which the initials "E. R." are introduced. The letters are formed of flat bands, with a veined line on either side, and the ground is cut into sunk pockets (p. 29). The circles are divided into three by measuring the circumference six times round and then taking the alternative divisions. On these the curved lozenge is described (p. 27), the curve being one side of an equilateral triangle. In the left circle half the radius is set out on either side of the three central divisions, and the new points found will be the centres—using the radius of the circle for striking the outer lines of the angular channels on either side. The inner lines are drawn in by hand.

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For the right-hand circle three intersecting circles are described from the centres of the three small diamonds. The sub-divisions are drawn in by hand, or struck with the radius which described the enclosing circle from points to be found on the circumference. The border is the same as *a*, Fig. 26.

Figures 35 and 36 are portions of an eighteenth-century mangle board in the Berlin Museum.

The centre of the circle of Fig. 35 is composed of two intersecting triangles, the bands of which are carved with the "cable border," and the outer band of the circle with the feathered border *b*. The detail given would be very suitable for a small box of string to be hung on the wall, or the small square would do for a square box or, if duplicated, for an oblong box. The small circles at the top suggest an arrangement for cresting, and so does the ornament on the top of Fig. 4.

In Fig. 36 the "cable border" (*a*) is carved on the intersecting bands in the centre, and the feathered border (*b*) on the marginal band of the circle

The mangle board will be found fully illustrated in Herr Carl von Grunow's "Kerbschnitt-vorlagen," with many other very interesting geometrical patterns.

Fig. 32.
Scandinavian Hand Mangle.
Stockholm Museum.

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Fig. 33. Hairpin Box Lid, with Initials "E. R."

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The Russian hand mirror presents no fresh difficulties to the carver except in the shaping of the handle, and this can be done by whoever is employed to prepare the wood. The handle should be slightly bevelled and the

Fig. 35.

Top of Mangle Board.
Dated 1708. Berlin Museum.

wood sloped towards the eye of the spiral. For this larger tools would be necessary than those given in Fig. 11, as well as some experience of relief carving. The bevel is ornamented with veined lines.

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If the square is considered too small for the mirror, the opening could be increased to the size of the circle. The glass is let into a rebate at the back, and is held in place

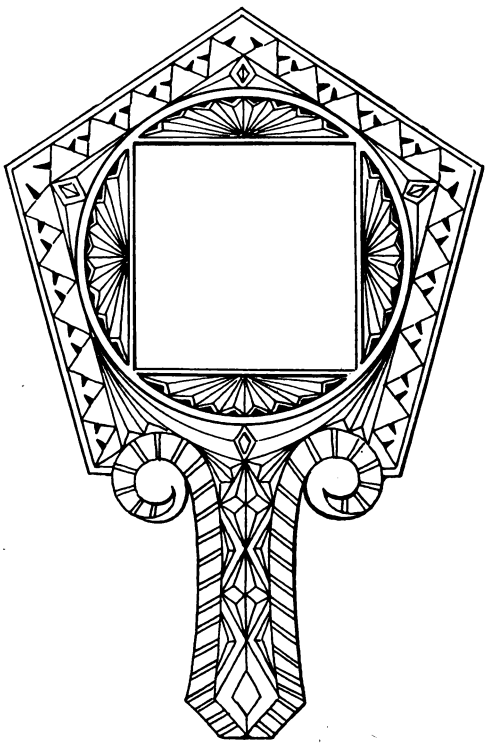

Fig. 37. Russian Hand Mirror.

by a pentagonal piece of wood, the same size as the front, minus the handle. The wood at the back is carved and is fixed to the front by needle points, inserted in the carved detail. A description of the colouring is given on p. 81.

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For further geometrical patterns the student can refer to "Träsniderimönster," by Wilhelm Oldenburg, in which 250 geometrical motives, drawn from various examples of chip-carving in the Northern Museum, Stockholm, are given. They show how tastefully domestic objects were carved by the Scandinavian peasant, and how successfully he used the knife.

Fig. 36.

Portion of Mangle Board.
Dated 1708. Berlin Museum.

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Chapter V

STRAPWORK PATTERNS

A very important point for the student to consider is the value of plain surfaces, and the carver, whatever the style he may be working in, should not lose sight of this. The French wood-carvers of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries set off their carving to the very best advantage by the judicious way they concentrated their work on certain parts of the panel, leaving large portions of it plain. Interesting examples of this may be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

In England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when chip-carving was employed on the chests, we often see only a small portion of the panel carved. The ambition of the modern chip-carver is to leave no portion of the wood uncarved, and the result is an over-decorated surface without contrast or repose. There is a cast in the Victoria and Albert Museum of a Norwegian bench-end (No. 248, 1882), in which the upper part of the wood is carved with a large circle filled with intersecting circles like Fig. 14. The lozenge-shaped compartments are carved into the usual angular channels, and the triangular spaces between left plain. It is executed on a large scale and looks remarkably well.

A similar example is shown in Fig. 38, a simple geometrical figure in which the spherical triangles and the central star are left uncarved. The marginal band,

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coming next to a plain surface, could be carved. To set out the figure the circumference should be divided into twelve parts, and from each of these points describe intersecting arcs with the same radius that struck the circle.

Fig. 39 is drawn from a mangle in the Stockholm Museum, but in the original the interlaced bands, as well as the band of the circumference, are carved with the

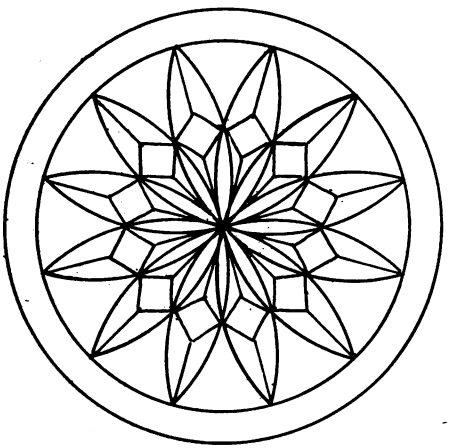

Fig. 38.

"cable border," and the spaces between the bands are also carved. When an elaborate circle like Fig. 39 is combined with other ornaments it is infinitely better to leave the bands plain unless the circle is set in a plain field, when the enriched bands would be very effective.

Although Fig. 39 is struck geometrically, it is not quite easy to follow how the interlaced bands are set out. Divide the circumference of the circle into six equal parts, and rule lines from these points to the centre. Bisect one of these lines, and on the point of bisection as centre,

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and with a radius half that of the circle, describe the six intersecting arcs which touch the circumference, and then the six inner ones which form the band. The points where the arcs intersect will be the points where they are stopped. The bands are united to every third semicircular band by arcs struck from each of the six points found previously on the circumference. It is difficult to set out, and the student must not be discouraged if he is not successful at first.

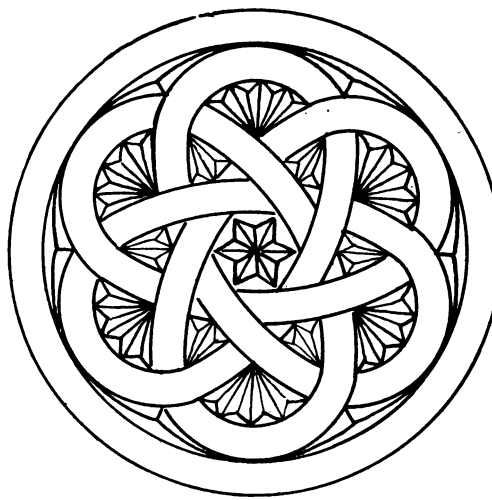

Fig. 39.

This pattern is difficult to set out, and the student must not be discouraged if he is not successful at first.

The money moulding (Fig. 40) can be utilised in many ways, and the complete circle can be repeated as desired. It is a useful space for initials. The same setting out looks well with a daisy filling. An example of the daisy is given in Fig. 54. Fig. 41 is described on pages 75 and 76.

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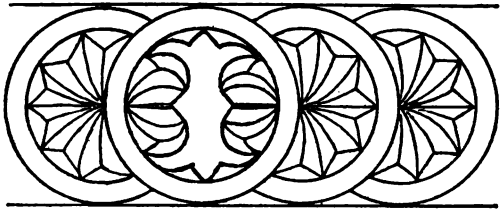

Fig. 40.

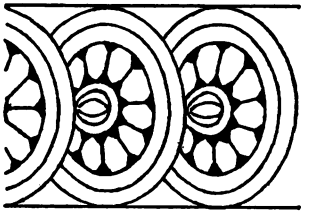

Fig. 41.

Fig. 42.

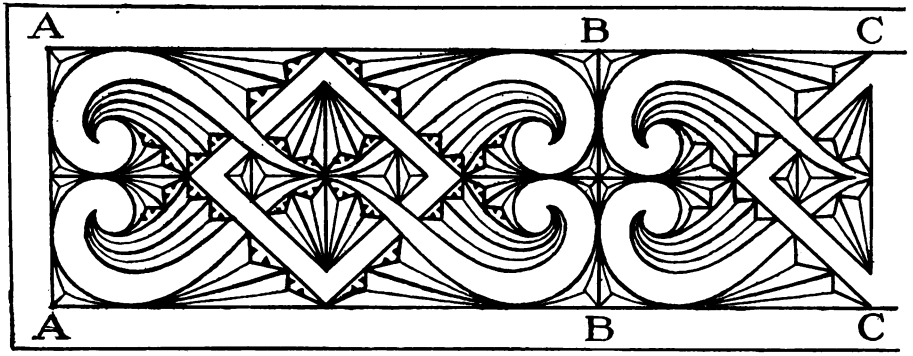

Fig. 43.

Fig. 43*a*.

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Figs. 42 and 43a show different kinds of letters with backgrounds composed of sunk triangular pockets. The sunk pocket accentuates the plain surface of the letter better than if some of the sides of the triangles were left up.

Strapwork bands drawn freehand can be very effectively introduced, as illustrated in Fig. 43. This pattern, enlarged to about two inches in width, with a quarter of an inch plain margin on either side, makes a very suitable design for a picture frame or for the stiles of a chest or cupboard. The pattern is a quarter repeat, from B to C to the central horizontal line, and can be contracted or enlarged to suit the size required. As a variety, a circle with a band could take the place of the diamond. The picture frame would be better mortised and tenoned together, rather than mitred, but in any case when carved a ridge should be left along the joint and the surface left intact and not veined, so as not to weaken the construction by cutting into the joint. For example, the ridge at B should come where the tenon fits into the mortise. In setting out a design the position of the joints should always be taken into account.

Fig. 43 would have to be adapted at the corners for a frame. The best way to do this would be to have the diamond in the four corners and cross it with diagonal lines, if the frame were mitred, so that the ridge should come on the mitre joint. The intermediate spaces between the bands of the diamond and the diagonal lines should be carved similarly to the other diamonds. The portions of the straps which pass under the diamond would have to be omitted at the corners. Fig. 43, A to B, would also lend itself for the top of a small oblong box, taking the diamond as the central feature.

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Many of the Jacobean and French strapwork designs on old woodwork and on books would be suggestive for this class of design. The student, however, must carefully study the designs, so that he may thoroughly understand how the pattern is composed and the connection of one band with the other, otherwise the pattern becomes disjointed and the flow of line is lost.

When bands are employed they should stand out as a distinctive feature and not be too insignificant.

The panel from a thirteenth-century diptych (Fig. 44) is a very early example in chip-carving of interlaced bands with freehand details. The background consists of four-sided and triangular pockets. The letters are painted, but there is no reason why the carver should not adapt them to a carved treatment. The square given in Fig. 49 could easily be drawn to fit an oblong shape and would do for the corner of the border of Fig. 44.

Fig. 44. Panel from a 13th Century Diptych.

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Chapter VI

FREEHAND PATTERNS

Various natural forms can be made use of by the chip-carver in designing freehand patterns, but he must bear in mind that any attempt at naturalism should be avoided.

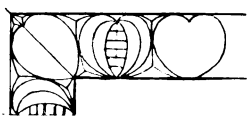

Fig. 45.

Fig. 45 is a border for a small mitred frame, and is based on the Cape gooseberry. The design may be treated in various ways. The pattern is outlined with a V or veined line, and the alternate centre compartment is cross-hatched with deep V-lines. This cross-hatching is very effective (see Fig. 54). The ground spaces between the compartments are carved into sunk pockets. If the student wanted to do more carving, the two divisions on either side of the cross-hatching could be sloped under each other by cutting the inner line round vertically and sloping the wood from the outer line into this cut, as in *d*, Fig. 26, or the divisions could be cut into angular channels. The central lozenge could be alternately cross-hatched or sunk. If all the heart-shaped compartments were carved it would be better to leave the ground plain.

Figs. 46 and 47 are also designed from natural forms. In Fig. 46 the small triangles might be left up along the base line, but in Fig. 47 the sides should all be sloped. The central vein of the leaf should be marked by a V-line.

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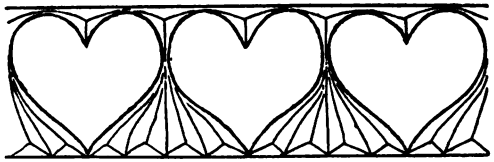

Fig. 46.

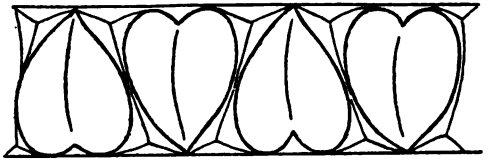

Fig. 47.

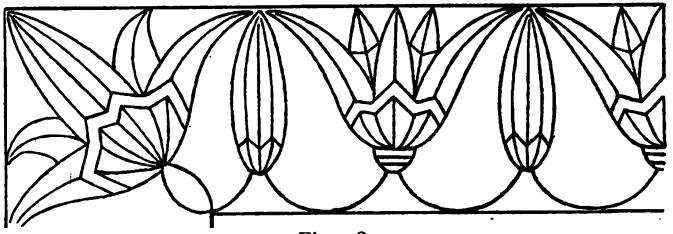

Fig. 48.

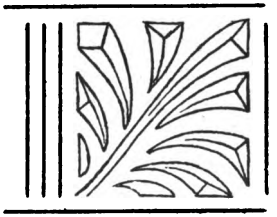

Fig. 49

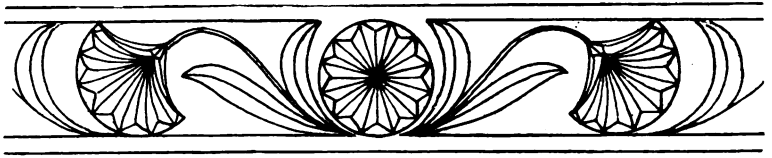

Fig. 50.

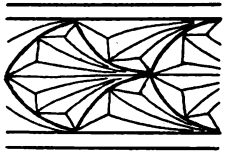

Fig. 51.

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Oriental patterns are full of suggestions for the designer, who will find it very interesting to adapt them to the style of carving set forth in this book. Fig. 48 is an adaptation of the well-known Egyptian lotus flower and bud. The sunk channels of the calyx of the flower should be the reverse of those on the petals. The curve of the stems should be expressed by a V-line. The left-hand corner shows how the pattern can be adapted to a square border or a frame. Fig. 50 is reminiscent of Persia, and would be suitable for the sides of a small box or a frame. The design could be repeated according to the space to be covered. On the vertical sides of the frame variety could be obtained if only one of the flowers in profile with the two leaves, springing from the marginal line, were repeated. The flowers are carved into angular channels, leaving the small triangles at the edge of the circle up, and the stalks and leaves are V-grooved.

The scale border, Fig. 51, looks well on the edges of shelves, screens, frames, etc.

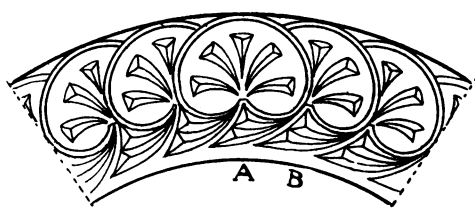

Fig. 52. Water-leaf Treatment.

Fig. 52 is a design for a bread platter, which is usually made with a broad convex moulding. The moulding should be divided into quarters and then into eighths. From each point found, rule lines to the centre of the platter. The full view of the leaf (A) should be placed in

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every quarter, and the half leaf, which is the repeating unit, A to B, should fill the other divisions.

The shape of the leaf is defined by two strong veined or V-lines, and the flat surface is ornamented with five sunk pockets. The outer line of the leaf is cut at the top, and the wood sloped from the circumference to the edge of the leaf. A narrow band is left on the inside of the moulding from which the stalks spring, and between these are two radiating sunk pockets.

The platter has usually a bead moulding on either side of the large mouldings, and the most effective treatment for this is to ornament the moulding with oblique lines, either V-cut or veined, but the lines must be strong.

The same design could be used on a circular or oval frame, and could be either gilded or coloured.

Fig. 53 is the recollection of a frame shown in the Russian section of the Paris Exhibition in 1900. For simplicity of execution and harmony of colour it was most satisfactory. The design was carved on one of the small cabinet frames which can be purchased at any of the fancy wood depôts for carving. The frames are made out of one piece of wood, so that there are no joints to consider. The top and one of the sides are usually the same width, and the bottom of the frame is wider, and the fourth side narrower.

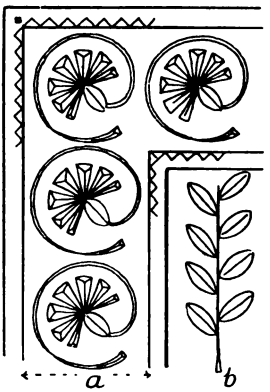

Fig. 53.
Cornflower Treatment.

The design would be quite unsuitable for a mitred

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frame or for a morticed and tenoned frame, on account of the sides being of different widths. If the wider border (*a*) were used on a frame of equal sides, the frame should be morticed and tenoned together, and the pattern set out so as to avoid the joint.

To set out Fig. 53 it is necessary to draw the exact size of the frame on paper, and space out the two wider sides, in accordance with the design, by ruling a series of parallel lines at 45° with the set square, these lines forming the central line for the calyx and petal above it. Draw in one flower and stalk, and be careful that the lines follow those of the illustration—that is to say, if a different size is required. Then either make a complete tracing and transfer it to the wood, or divide the wood according to the drawing, and trace each unit in its place.

The pattern at *a* is intended for the wider sides, whilst the pattern at *b* can be arranged for the narrower sides. All designs are the better for boundary lines, and therefore on either side of the cornflowers are double lines; the inner one being decorated with the triangular border need not be veined, but if space permits, and the outer line does not coincide with the edge of the wood, the veiner can be used. The stalks of the flowers are cut with a V-line, and are finished off with a narrow sunk pocket at the end. The petals of the flowers are all carved with sunk pockets, and the calyx is sloped from the edge to the centre line. The leaves at *b* are treated in the same way. The frame was coloured a dark green, the stalk and the calyx a lighter shade of green, and the flower a dark blue. The small triangles of the border were gilded. For the gilding, gold-shell is the best and easiest to manipulate. Powdered gold is less expensive, and can be mixed with a little gum,

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or gold ink can be purchased in bottles. Gold-leaf requires a good deal of preparation and practice, and is hardly necessary for this class of work.

Instructions for staining and colouring are given in Chap. X.

Figs. 54 and 56 are designs for a small Swedish tea-caddy, four inches square, and made in apple-wood, a close, even-grained wood, not quite so tough as pear-wood.

Fig. 54. Lid of Swedish Tea-Caddy.

The pattern for the lid (Fig. 54) is adapted from a stone slab from the palace of Koujunjik, and now in the British Museum. The lotus flower forms the principal motive.

In order to bring the design within the scope of the chip-carver, certain modifications have had to be made. The graceful and symmetrical spacing of the ground is a very distinctive feature of the design. The flowers are veined, and the petals cut into angular grooves. The under petals will require four cuts as drawn in Fig. 48.

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The calyx is treated in the same way as described for Fig. 48. The seed-pods in the corner are outlined and cross-hatched with strongly-marked V-lines. The flowers and the pods are connected to each other by a veined line, the stalks being formed by small triangular-sunk pockets.

The two inner circles are veined, and the radiating lines of the daisy are cut down vertically, lightening the cut almost to nothing as it reaches the centre. On the top of each petal a small triangular cut is made, and then the petals are sloped one under the other. The design for the lid is completed by the border given at Fig. 55, which is carried right round the square. The lines of the border are veined, and the triangles are sloped from the diagonals to the corners of the small squares. Beyond the carved border is a plain margin, a quarter of an inch wide.

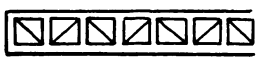

Fig. 55. Border.

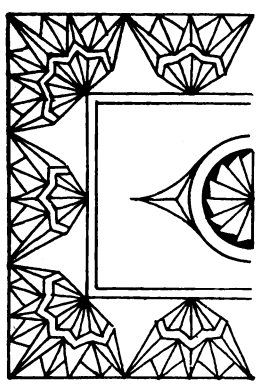

Fig. 56.
Half Side of Caddy.

Fig. 56 is the pattern for the sides of the caddy, the wider border being enclosed by the smaller one (Fig. 55), with a plain margin beyond. The plain margin at the sides is a necessity in order to avoid cutting into the construction. The carved treatment is the same as the lid.

After the tea-caddy is carved it should be coloured. The ground should be green, the calyx of the flowers and the cross-hatching of the pods a lighter green, the lotus flowers a dark blue, the

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daisies and the small squares of the border gold or yellow, the zig-zag bands and the small triangular-sunk pockets a rich dark red or crimson.

It will be noticed in the patterns given in this chapter how very small the unit of design is in each, and how the effect is obtained by repetition. In Fig. 45, in addition to repetition, there is alternation, another useful feature in design. In pattern designing, repeating units are the easiest to start with, as the student begins by dividing the space into quarters or eighths, and then makes the design for one division. This can then be traced, and repeated or reversed according to the requirements of the space to be filled.

The position of the ornament should always be considered, as certain treatments emphasise a horizontal, vertical, or flat treatment, and it is as well to employ them, and to notice these points in studying old work. The design of Fig. 54 is specially suitable for the lid of a box, as it looks equally well from every point of view.

The chip-carver who is unable to draw must content himself with geometrical patterns. It is not borne out in practice that every one can make his own designs. Designing, like all other forms of art, requires a long apprenticeship, and to attempt to do so before the student can draw or has learned the value of line and form is unwise. It is from the work of the past that we shall gain our experience, and to profit by it there is no better exercise than to translate a design from one material to another, as has been done in the design for the box-lid, Fig. 54. To be a successful designer the student must thoroughly understand the limitations and the possibilities of the tools and material with which he has to deal.

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Chapter VII

ICELANDIC SURFACE CARVING

Geometrical chip-carving is to be found in Iceland, but the characteristic peasant carving is freehand. The old work was drawn direct on the wood with a piece of chalk, the designs being mostly composed of bands and scrolls, and the ground of sunk pockets.

Fig. 57 is from an Icelandic knitting-needle box, in the Victoria and Albert Museum. It forms the lid of the box, and is reproduced on a smaller scale than Fig. 58. The inscription will give the student some idea of spacing out letters so that they may form part of the ornament. The letters in this example have become very debased and almost illegible. They are as follows, "FINNS DOTTIR," the last word meaning "daughter." There is another letter at the end of the line. Fig. 58 is adapted from the side of the same box.

In the original the ground is cut away, but as this branch of carving will not be dealt with here it has been necessary to fill up the ground spaces with leaves and sunk pockets treated in the usual chip-carving way. This very common method of treatment in Iceland is illustrated again in Fig. 60.

Fig. 58 is composed of a wave scroll, which can be contracted or lengthened as desired. It forms the basis of many of the patterns, the spaces between the scrolls being treated in a variety of ways. This simple carving

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Fig. 57. Lid of an Icelandic Knitting-needle Box.
Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 715, 1888.

Fig. 58.

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was always done with the knife, the peasant in Iceland being familiar with its use from his youth up. There are certainly great advantages in using the knife, as it would suffice to carve nearly all the examples illustrated in this book, whereas if tools were used five or six would be necessary. In Fig. 58 a veiner was used for the surface lines, but although it did the incised lines quicker than the knife, it was not a necessity, as a V-line could have been cut with a knife, as in Figs. 59 and 60. The surface lines should be drawn in with a pencil before they are carved.

In Fig. 58 the outline of the pattern was cut with a V-line, and then the leaves and sunk pockets were carved. It is useless, however, for the student to attempt even so simple a pattern as this, which depends entirely on the free sweep of line, unless he can absolutely control the tool he is using. To gain this dexterity, practice on a piece of waste wood is a necessity. Directly the tool is getting unmanageable the student should stop and try a cut in the other direction, although the aim should be to attain a quick free sweep. It is far better to go round a curve with a quick firm sweep than to endeavour to do it slowly with the idea that you can see better what you are about. Settle in your mind the curve that you want, and strike for it boldly, according to the limitations imposed by the grain of the wood. For a long sweep one frequently has to work with the grain, against the grain, and across the grain, so that the cut has to be humoured accordingly. The knowledge of how to combat these limitations only comes by practice and observation.

The student will find that as he gains facility with the knife he can reduce the number of cuts, and it will be

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easier to get round the quicker curves by starting the V-line with a slanting cut on either side, rather than with a vertical cut first, as described in Chap. II. In the leaves in Fig. 58, or in any lozenge-shaped compartment in which there is no diamond in the centre, it is not necessary to cut the centre line first, but work on a slant from the sides to the middle until the cuts meet. The centre line can

Fig. 59. Icelandic Box.
Height 5 in.; length 10½ in.; width 5¼ in.
Victoria and Albert Museum. No. 716, 1888.

be touched up afterwards if necessary. The student, however, will soon find out for himself how he can best attain the object he has in view.

Fig. 59 is an oblong box carved in pine, and painted green. The sides are three-eighths of an inch thick, and the ends five-eighths, on account of the dovetails. The

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design at either end is half the pattern of the lid without the border. The carving is rough, but the design is pleasing. The outline of the pattern is cut down straight, and the ground sloped from the margin into the vertical cut. The little triangular ornament round the lid, although so simple, is always effective. The box is an eighteenth-century piece of work.

Fig. 60. Icelandic Box. Diameter 11 in.
Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 720, 1888.

Fig. 60 is an excellent example of the style, and shows considerable skill in the manipulation of the knife. The ellipse in the centre of the circle is a pleasing feature, and the initials "T. A.D." are very decorative. The carving is identical with that just described, being composed of the V-line and the sunk pocket. The outside edge of the

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Fig. 61. Panel by M. E. Reeks.

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pattern is set down straight and the wood sloped from the circumference of the circle into it. The design is well worth studying, as it is the result of an intimate knowledge of what the knife can do, and is certainly more interesting than the purely geometrical.

Fig. 61 has been cleverly adapted from Fig. 60, and as it is on a larger scale, the method of work will be more easily seen.

This surface carving is very much more suitable for the carving of tables or the seats and backs of chairs than the carvings in high relief which are so often seen at local exhibitions.

It is, however, to be regretted that these objects are always selected for carving by the amateur, as they do not present a desirable field for carving.

If a table or a tray is to be carved the ornament should be restricted to a border, with an incised date or monogram in the centre. These are really superfluous, as the centre of the table or tray is rarely seen when in use, and serves its purpose very much better when left plain.

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Chapter VIII

NORWEGIAN SURFACE CARVING

It is interesting to compare the peasant style of carving in one country with that of another, and see how each country differs in treatment and in design.

Figs. 62 and 63 are from a Norwegian mangle in the Victoria and Albert Museum (No. 571, 1891). Only the most interesting parts have been illustrated, in order that the detail may be given as large as possible.

The patterns are composed of scrolled bands, very similar in design to many of the Icelandic patterns, but in the latter the greater part of the surface of the band is left intact, whereas in the Norwegian example the whole surface of the band is carved and a small portion of the ground forming an ornamental shape is left plain (see sections *a b*). There are the same angular grooves to be noted in Figs. 62 and 63 as in all the previous examples, the variety being produced by the arrangement of the cuts. The circle at the top of Fig. 62 has a very different effect from any yet given, notwithstanding that it is carved in precisely the same way. The same thing may be said in regard to Fig. 63. The symmetrical shape at the top, ornamented with the series of narrow sunk pockets and the angular grooves on either side, also produces a different effect. The mangle is carved in a dark, close-

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grained wood, which is left the natural colour of the wood. The student will find it an excellent exercise to adapt these patterns to other sizes. They would work out well for one of the small white-wood coffee trays, for a glove-box, and numerous other objects. The plain, heart-shaped spaces could be utilised for initials or dates.

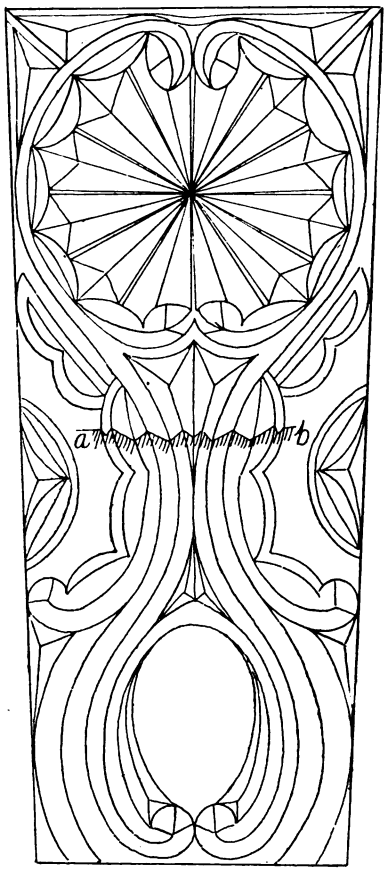

Fig. 62.

Details from a Norwegian Mangle.
Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 571, 1851.

The letters illustrated in Figs. 64 and 65 were sketched from a Norwegian mangle in the Victoria and Albert Museum, in the same case as No. 571. The carving of the letters consists of two angular grooves, as shown in section *a b* on *D*. In the original the ground is carved into sunk pockets, which somewhat detracts from the value of the letters. Compare Figs. 64 and 65 with Figs. 57 and 60 —the carved treat-

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ment of the letter is exactly reversed. The bands in the Icelandic letters are kept flat, and the bands of the Norwegian letters are grooved. Each of the examples is designed with due regard to the way in which it is to be carved, and the result is most satisfactory and thoroughly in keeping with the designs of which it forms a part.

The drawing and proportion of each letter or number, so as to make it suit the design and the carved treatment, is a very important matter, and one the carver often does not sufficiently consider.

Two excellent text-books, written by Mr. Lewis F. Day entitled, "Alphabets Old and New" and "Lettering in Ornament," explain the principles on which the students should work, and he will be

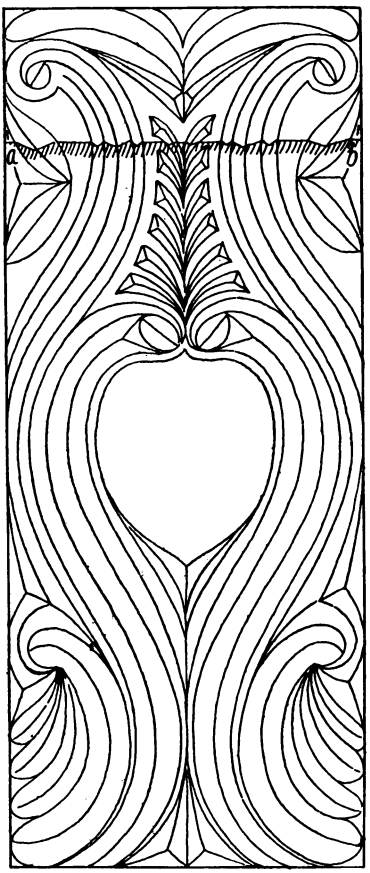

Fig. 63.

Details from a Norwegian Mangle.
Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 571, 1891.

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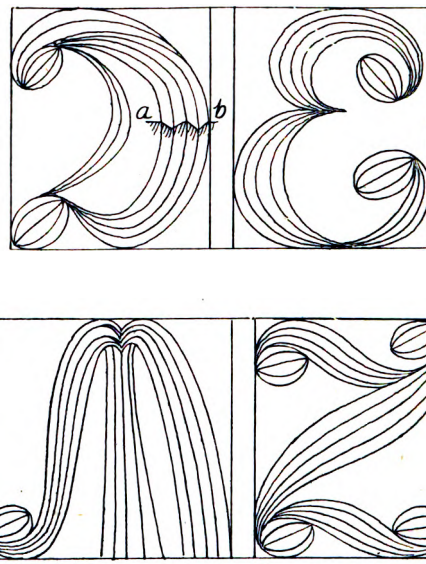
surprised to find how much there is to observe and learn, before he can satisfactorily design even a simple letter or a date, and the scope there is for pleasing ornament in an ordinary inscription.



Figs. 64 and 65.
Norwegian Letters.

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Chapter IX

MAORI CARVING

In the previous chapters only the peasant or surface carving of the European countries has been illustrated. The primitive carvings of the other continents are mostly

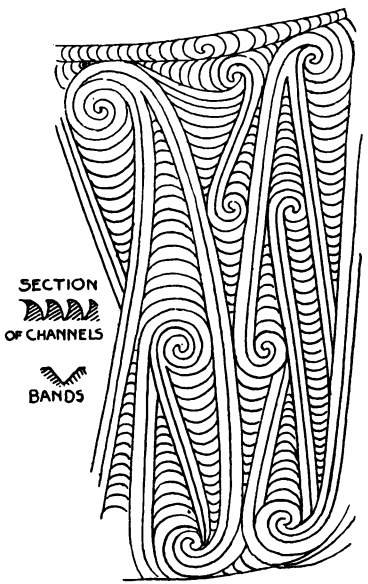

Fig. 66. Detail from a Maori Whistle.
British Museum.

geometrical and so similar to that which we have been considering that, with the exception of the Maori surface

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carving in New Zealand, they will not be dealt with here.

The Maori surface carving, other than geometrical, is very individual, although the meandering wave lines recall the patterns from Mycenæ in the early Greek room at the British Museum.

Metal tools were never used in New Zealand until quite recently, although this was no disadvantage, as the Maoris excelled in the making and use of stone implements, which were employed in the arts of war as well as of peace. The chisels and gouges were made of greenstone, and when necessary these shaped pieces of stone were securely lashed with twisted flax to a wooden handle.

Fig. 67. Border.

Occasionally, for small work, a piece of stone would have a gouge made at either end of varying widths; a flake of obsidian, or the sharp edge of a mussel or other shell fish, would be utilised when a very keen edge was wanted. There was certainly no loss of cutting power in the tools used, as may be seen by examining the delicate sharp work to be found on the old canoe paddles, boxes, and other articles.

The geometrical patterns of all the savage tribes were based on weaving motives, primitive man not having been subjected to the Gothic influence so noticeable in the European geometrical work previously illustrated. In the chip-carving of the savage tribes a sharp edge is rarely seen, the aim being that the carving should not spoil the

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smooth surface of the wood. To protect this, between the angular channels a flat band of wood was left, which varied in width according to the size of the pattern. In addition to this, any sharp angles were rubbed down with a piece of shell. In consequence the handles of the canoes, the warriors' weapons, implements, etc., although often most richly carved, are perfectly smooth to the touch. This was, of course, essential. Generally speaking, it will be found that primitive man never sacrificed the utility of an object to its ornamentation, a point which civilised man would do well to note.

Apart from the chip-carving or geometrical patterns, the Maori's scroll and band patterns are not, I think, to

Fig. 68. Border and Section.

be found in any other country, although there is a great similarity with the Mycenæan ornament. It is impossible here to illustrate the endless varieties of the Maori patterns, but many interesting examples can be seen at the British Museum, in the Ethnographical Gallery. A study of the work itself is infinitely better than examining illustrations, although Mr. Augustus Hamilton, in his "Maori Art," gives some very interesting examples of boxes, bowls, weapons, etc.

The Maori loved his work, and took a personal and national pride in it. He made his canoe, his box, or whatever it was he wanted, and used it as soon as it was made, devoting his leisure time to ornamenting it so that he could enjoy that part of the work, and was in no

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hurry to finish it until it was as beautiful as he could make it.

The basis of the freehand patterns is a strap or band, which usually terminates in scrolls. It is sometimes straight, sometimes curved, and sometimes interlaced, although the latter is more common in the later work. The composition of line was freely appreciated by the Maoris, and no better example can be found for this than the carved whistle in the British Museum, which is 6½ in. long. One side of the pattern is given in Fig.. 66. The bands have all a deep angular channel, with a narrow flat, rounded over at the edges. The spaces between the bands have curved angular channels. These channels are not a V in section, but one side is slightly undercut and hollowed out with a gouge whilst the other side is convex. There is a small band between each (see Sections, Fig. 66. The drawing of the scrolls and how the bands spring from them should be carefully noted, as it is the same in all the patterns.

The border at Fig. 67 is similar in design, but the carved treatment is slightly varied. The bands have the angular groove, but the curved spaces between are flatter, the curved line being cut and the surface sloped from one ridge to the other, as described on p. 35 (*d*), and shown in Section at Fig. 68.

The carved treatment of this border is the same as Fig. 67, but the pattern is varied by the introduction of a zig-zag line. It is carved on a wooden bowl over four feet in diameter, but that is no reason why it should not be executed on a smaller scale. By a careful study of the Maori carving there can be no doubt that the carver drew his patterns direct on the wood, and if any attempt were

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made to trace or repeat a unit the whole character of the work would be lost. The designs are never symmetrical, although they are admirably balanced, and there is a fund of originality in the way the spaces are filled.

Figs. 69 and 70 are two warriors' clubs. They are

Fig. 69.

Fig. 70.

Maori Warrior Clubs.

easily recognised as Maori work, but the bands have a double V-groove with a rounded member between and at the edges. The ground spaces are filled with elliptical beads, which look like seeds, and are most effective. (See Fig. 71.)

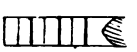

Fig. 71.
Section of Beads.

What is known as the "money moulding," in Jacobean work, looks quite a different thing when treated by the Maori carver. The discs are more elliptical than circular,

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and have a V-grooved band round the edge, and the small space of the disc that shows before the next one comes upon it is filled in with elliptical beads, decreasing in size from the centre to the edges. A sketch showing the treatment is given on p. 49, Fig. 41. A diaper pattern of these discs decreasing and increasing in size on an oval box was most effective. These Maori patterns could not be carved entirely with a knife, but only two or three tools would be necessary for each pattern if they were selected according to the curves required, which would naturally depend on the scale of the carving.

By experience and experiment the student ought to be able to find out the limitations of his tools, and then make his designs accordingly. A simple but vigorous style in carving is then evolved, very different from that produced when a multiplicity of tools is used.

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Chapter X

COLOUR AS APPLIED TO CARVED WOOD

Colour is a valuable addition to simple wood-carving, more especially when the object is carved in a soft light wood. It is essential that the wood be quite free from grease before the colour is applied, and therefore the student should take every precaution to ensure this by keeping some paper under the hand whilst carving. If, however, the wood appears greasy, the flat surfaces may be very lightly touched over with Oakey's No. o or oo glass-paper, and the carved surfaces cleaned with some French chalk applied with a pad of wadding. The wood should then be brushed over with a hard stiff wooden nail-brush.

Water stains are more liable to fade, especially green, than oil stains, but the latter are more difficult to manipulate, and always leave a glazy surface. For small articles the water stains sold for the painted *marqueterie* are convenient, as they can be obtained in small quantities, but if a large quantity of walnut, oak, mahogany or ebony be required, Stevens' water stains will be found very good. The colours are somewhat crude, but when judiciously mixed together, very satisfactory results may be obtained. The stains should be diluted with a little water and the mixture stirred each time the brush is dipped in.

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If the wood is soft and consequently porous, or if it has been turned, as in the case of the buttons, it is better to put on a coat of gummy water before the first coat of stain is applied.

Various adhesives can be used, but the simplest is to procure about a tablespoonful of gelatine, cover it entirely with cold water, and after letting it soak for half an hour, gradually pour on boiling water until it has all dissolved and is quite smooth. Keep it in a cool place until it is set, when it should be a stiff jelly. Take about a teaspoonful of the jelly and pour on it two or three teaspoonfuls of boiling water and let it cool for a few minutes, and then apply the liquid over the surface of the wood with a brush. It is safer to do this the day before, or at least three hours before applying the stains.

It is better to put on two or three coats of the stain than to apply one dark one, and after each application, when the stain is dry, the wood should be brushed over with a clean stiff brush before the next coat is applied. It must be remembered that the colour dries lighter than it looks when wet, and that it also becomes darker after it has been slightly polished.

For a plain surface use a soft brush rather full of colour, and apply the stain quickly, and try and avoid going over the same part twice.

When the wood is partially carved apply the stain in the same way, and do not stop to make good any omissions in the carved detail; this you can do directly you have finished the first coat. If you pause the stain is apt to be patchy, especially if the wood is porous. The important point is to get the plain surfaces a good even colour, and not streaky.

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The student must be prepared to try several experiments for himself, as only by practical experience will he attain success. It must be borne in mind that no two pieces of the same wood take quite the same colour, and that a hard and uneven grain is much more difficult to treat than one that is softer and more even in the grain. The cheap white wooden articles sold at the various depots for chip-carving, painting, or poker work usually take the stain very well, and on these the colours used keep much the same tone, whereas on pearwood they become very much darker.

The student should have a piece of the same wood to try the colours on if possible, and when colouring buttons an extra button or two should always be procured for experiments.

For incised work, mark in the design with a hard pencil and stain the wood before veining the lines. When carved they will appear in the natural colour of the wood upon a dark ground.

It is also advisable to stain the wood first when two or three colours are introduced, as suggested on pp. 37 and 56, as then there is no risk of blurring the detail when applying the surface colour. The great difficulty in staining the wood before it is carved is that the pencil-marks of the pattern are difficult to see. To obviate this, put in the leading lines of the design with a V or a veiner before the stain is applied. The angular grooves can be cut afterwards.

The carved details must be touched over with the adhesive before putting on the colour when water stains or lacquers are being used, but this is not usually necessary with the *marqueterie* stains or with

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oil-colours, unless they have been very much diluted with turps.

For oil-colours the following tubes will be found useful. Prussian blue, sepia, raw sienna, and light red, and add to these when you have decided on your scheme of colour. A mixture of Prussian blue, raw sienna, and light red makes a very nice olive-green, but the Prussian blue is a strong colour and a very little of it is required.

The oil stains, when prepared for large surfaces, should be used as soon as they are mixed, otherwise if they stand more than a few hours, the stain, after it is applied, becomes "tacky," dries slowly, and will not brush up evenly. Great care must be taken in applying the oil-colours not to get the surface streaky, and when the colour is applied over a large flat field it should be put on evenly with a camel's-hair brush, and not rubbed about. To get rid of some of the oil squeeze the colour on to a piece of blotting-paper or brown paper before mixing it with the turps. When a large surface is to be stained green, it is better to have the colours ground in turps and not in oil, but this is more expensive as they have to be specially prepared.

For the carved buttons (page 37), take the principal colour of the material with which the buttons are to be worn—say blue, green, or brown—and match this as near as you can with the paints, working the colours together with a palette knife and a little turps. Prussian blue is too strong a colour to be used by itself for a ground, but it can be toned down with other blues, indigo and light red. The foundation colour should be put on before the buttons are fixed to the wood for carving, as it is very important

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to have the underside and edge of the button thoroughly well stained on account of the friction. This first colour will appear wherever the wood is left intact, as on the margin, the centres of flowers, and the raised diamonds and triangles.

When the carving is finished colour the detail. Indelible inks may be tried for this. If the student cannot manage the staining before carving and has to go over the whole surface, he can recut the carved detail unless he wishes to use oil-colours.

Of the modern-coloured chip-carving, that done by the Russian peasants is much the most satisfactory. The colours used are very subdued—brown, dark blue (almost black), dark olive-green, light red, and a touch of gold on some of the flat surfaces are blended together on the mirror illustrated with most satisfactory results. The ground of the mirror is stained a bronzy brown, with a water stain, and the carved detail is picked out in oil-colours. This prevents the detail from running into the background.

After the colouring is completed and the wood has been well brushed up, a little dry wax may be rubbed on a clean brush for the final polish, or one coat of French polish diluted with a little methylated spirit may be lightly applied with a pad of wadding, but it is not to be rubbed round in the usual way.

Oil-colours do not require to be polished except when they have been much diluted with turps, and then a little dry wax can be used on the brush. Wax dissolved in turps can be used to polish objects stained with water-stains, but only if one colour is used.

It is infinitely nicer when using colour to show the

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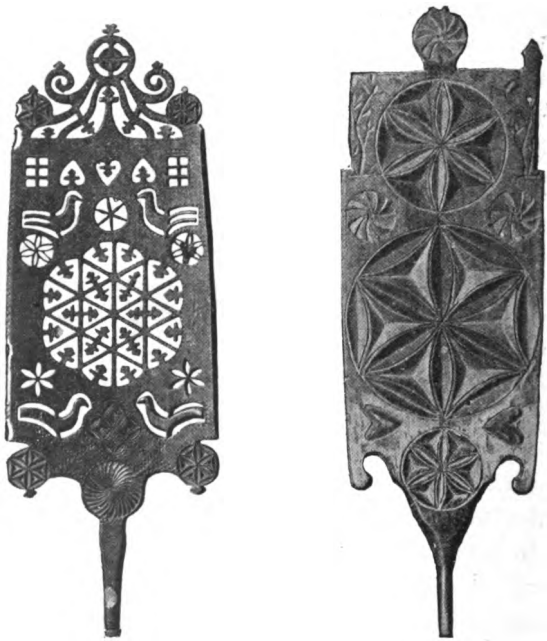
texture of the wood, but this is only possible with water-stains, indelible inks, or lacquers. The latter are, however, expensive, and require to be used in a room with a warm and even temperature. Soehnée Frères prepare some special "vernis" for colouring wood, with the proper adhesive for stopping the pores of the wood. These lacquers can be procured at most of the large artists' colourmen.



Spinning Wheel Heads.
Stockholm Museum.

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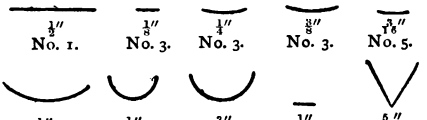

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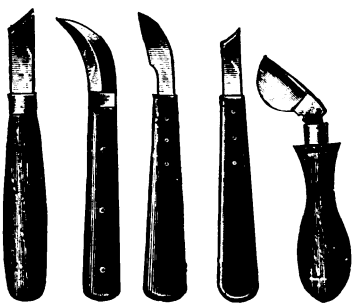

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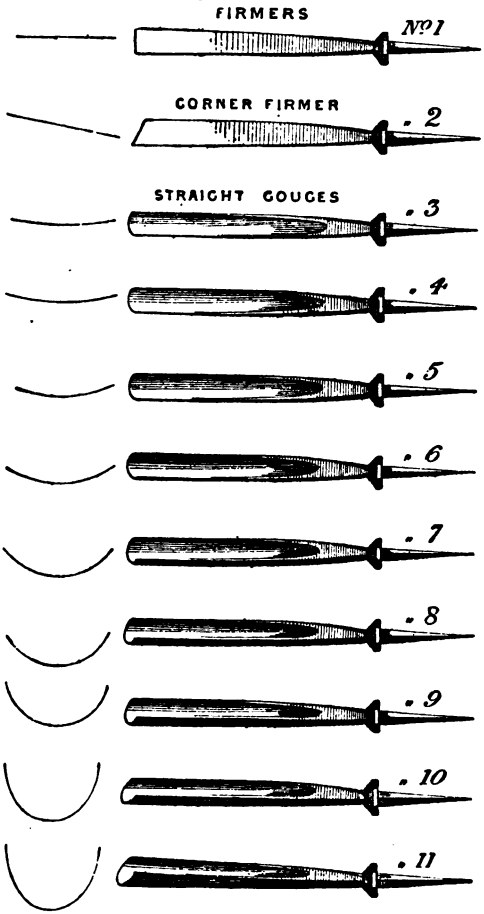

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